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SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE PARLIAMENTARY LEADER RESIGNS POST

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[C](#). LISBON 2365

[1](#). Summary: A Social Democratic parliamentary leader resigned his leadership position in protest of his party's cooperation with the leftist parties to investigate alleged CIA rendition flights at the expense of the Socialist government. The inability to prove a negation means that the CIA flight theory continues to make headlines. End summary.

[2](#). The Vice President of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) parliamentary group, Henrique Freitas, resigned his leadership position December 13 to protest his party leadership's cooperation with leftist parties regarding a visit of a European Parliament Commission investigating alleged CIA flights in Europe.

[3](#). The European Parliament has long alleged that the CIA conducted illegal rendition flights through Europe to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as part of the global war on terrorism. As noted reftels A-C, the Government of Portugal (GOP) has consistently denied knowledge of or cooperation with any such flight. Foreign Minister Luis Amado of the Socialist Party (PS) had not accepted previous invitations to testify before the European Parliament (EP). Hence, the EP Commission visited Portugal to interview GOP officials.

[4](#). When the EP Commission visited on December 6, the President of the National Assembly, Jaime Gama of the PS, refused permission to use the Senate Chamber for an official meeting. Thereafter, the President of the PSD bloc offered the use of its National Assembly offices for an informal meeting. The Commission met with members of the PSD, the Democratic Social Center, the Portuguese Communist Party, and the Left Bloc for approximately twenty minutes in the PSD offices.

[5](#). Freitas ostensibly resigned his position in protest of his party's cooperation with the left wing parties who, in the absence of any evidence, continue to try to embarrass the government with allegations of cooperation with CIA rendition flights. Freitas did not resign his parliamentary seat, but has been replaced as PSD Parliamentary Group Vice President by Fernando Negroao.

[6](#). News coverage stressed that Freitas resigned due to CIA flights. The resignation was not, however, in protest of any such flights, but rather in protest of the continued unsupported supposition that such flights occurred. A PSD colleague of Freitas suggested that the flight issue itself was less important to Freitas than the cooperation with the parties of the extreme left. Moreover, his colleague suggested, personal rivalries within the PSD may have been an even greater stimulus to Freitas, action.

Comment

[17](#). From our own view, the idea of a PSD official defending a PS government by formally protesting his own party's cooperation with the left is deliciously ironic. Nonetheless, this is yet another example of alleged CIA flights affecting the political climate here. European Parliamentarians and crusading journalists continue to get cheap headlines, given that the GOP cannot prove that flights did not occur. The philosophical impossibility of proving a negation will continue to bedevil the GOP.
O'Neal